

Section 220.

Areas of Historic and Archaeological Significance

A. Definition

Historic and archaeological resources include districts, sites, buildings, structures, objects, and landscapes included in or eligible for inclusion in the state and national registers of historic places, or areas designated as historically or archaeologically sensitive according to the predictive model developed by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission.

B. Findings

1. The Rhode Island coastal region has a rich and long history, and possesses many well-preserved examples of prehistoric and historic sites. The coastal zone contains an abundant and diverse number of native American Indian settlements, some dating back at least 3,000 years. The bulk of the information still to be obtained concerning Rhode Island's prehistory is associated with sites in the coastal zone. The Historical Preservation Commission has developed a predictive model that identifies those coastal sites where significant archaeological finds are most likely to be present.

2. Beginning with the first Europeans under Giovanni da Verrazano, who visited the site of Newport in the early 1500s, the coastal zone has been the location of important historic and architectural development. The Rhode Island coastal region is nationally recognized for its outstanding historic architecture, and the majority of all the sites and districts currently on the state and national registers of historic places are located in the coastal zone. Significant historic and archaeological sites are extremely valuable cultural, educational, economic, and recreational resources to the state's citizens and visitors alike, and they are part of the essential character of the coastal zone. Historic properties are a key element in defining the state's quality of life, and hence its attractiveness to a growing tourist industry and as a location for new investment. Historic sites and districts provide access to and enjoyment of scenic coastal areas, both in terms of the sites themselves and in the traditional land-use patterns which define many scenic qualities in the coastal zone.

3. Historic and archaeological resources in the coastal zone are under great pressure from a variety of forces which threaten their outright destruction or the degradation of their historic qualities and setting. Unsympathetic new development, erosion, artifact collectors, and rising sea levels are major factors in reducing the number and quality of these irreplaceable resources.

C. Policies

1. The Council's goal is to, where possible, preserve and protect significant historic and archaeological properties in the coastal zone.

2. Preservation of significant historic and archaeological properties is a high priority use of the coastal region. Activities which damage or destroy important properties shall be considered a low priority.

3. The Council shall require modification of, or shall prohibit proposed actions subject to, its jurisdiction where it finds a reasonable probability of adverse impacts on properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Adverse impacts are those which can reasonably be expected to diminish or destroy those qualities of the property which make it eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The Council shall solicit the recommendations of the Historical Preservation Commission regarding impacts on such properties.

4. Prior to permitting actions subject to its jurisdiction on or adjacent to properties eligible for inclusion (but not actually listed in the National Register of Historic Places), and/or areas designated as historically or archaeologically sensitive by the Historical Preservation Commission as the result of their predictive model, the Council shall solicit the recommendations of the Commission regarding possible adverse impacts on these properties. The Council may, based on the Commission's recommendations and other evidence before it, including other priority uses of this Program, require modification of or may prohibit the proposed action where such adverse impacts are likely.

5. Structural shoreline protection facilities may be permitted in Type 1 Waters provided that the structure is necessary to protect a structure which is currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.